

The Kingdom of Heaven

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Its Significance and Scope

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The Kingdom of Heaven: Its Significance and Scope.

By ARTHUR W. PINK.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," or more literally "The Kingdom of the Heavens," is an expression found only in Matthew's Gospel, and no attempt to expound the significance of this expression can be satisfactory which ignores this fact. There are certain words and phrases peculiar to different books of the Bible—"under the sun" of Ecclesiastes, the double "Verily" of John's Gospel, and the "Kingdom of Heaven" of Matthew may be cited as illustrations. It will usually be discovered that these distinctive words and phrases are *keys* to the books in which they are found, their frequent *repetition* defining the principal subjects of which they severally deal.

Now, it is commonly recognized by Bible students of repute that *the opening words* of each book of the Bible are of first importance seeing that they invariably contain in concentrated form that which is subsequently developed at length. The key is hung upon the door itself. The first few verses of each Gospel or Epistle will be found to set forth the principal subjects treated therein, and if this fact be ignored naught but confusion will ensue. What we have just stated is but one of the elementary principles in Bible study, yet it needs to be insisted upon and reiterated again and again. It is failure to use this key in connection with Matthew's Gospel which has resulted in a confused and erroneous understanding of its contents. No exposition of Matthew's Gospel is of any real value if it fails to notice and give due force and place to its opening statement—"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Once more: No attempt to bring out the leading features of the First Gospel can be deemed satisfactory which ignores the *position* that it occupies in the Sacred Canon. Coming as it does after the Old Testament and standing right at the threshold of the New, we should naturally expect to find that Matthew's Gospel is the connecting link between them, and therefore a book that is *transitionary* in its character. Furthermore, we should naturally expect to find that it is more *Jewish* than any other of the New Testament books. Nor are these *expectations* proven to be groundless. Even a casual study of Matthew reveals God still dealing with His Old Testament people, shows the Lord Jesus as occupying a distinctly Jewish relationship and expressly affirms therein that His earthly ministry was strictly confined to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" (see xv:24). Matthew shows us that, in accord with Old Testament prediction, God's Son had come to earth as "a Minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God, *to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (Rom. xv:8, 9), and hence it is that in this Gospel we find more frequently than anywhere else the expressions "that it

might be fulfilled," "so that it was fulfilled," and "then was fulfilled." Matthew presents Christ offering Himself to the Jews and then treats of the *consequences* which follow with their *rejection* of Him. Matthew, therefore, *explains why*, in the latter parts of the New Testament, we find that Israel has been temporarily cast off by God, why He is now taking out a people from among the Gentiles (Acts xv:14), why, in short, in this dispensation the Church has superseded the Israelitish theocracy.

"Let us now consider the Gospel by St. Matthew. This Gospel sets Christ before us in the character of the Son of David and of Abraham, that is to say, in connection with the promises made to Israel, but presents Him withal as Emmanuel, Jehovah, the Saviour, for such the Christ was. It is He who, being received, should have accomplished the promises (and hereafter He will do so) in favor of this beloved people. This Gospel is in fact the history of His rejection by the people, and consequently that of the condemnation of the people themselves, so far as their responsibility was concerned (for the counsels of God cannot fail), and the substitution of that which God was going to bring in according to His purpose" (J. N. Darby, Synopsis). These words fitly describe the character and scope of the First Gospel. It will be observed that they take due note of its opening verse, of its special Jewish trend, of the Messiah's rejection by the covenant people, and of the introduction of the church which now takes the place of the chosen nation, as well as makes mention both of human "responsibility" and the "counsels of God" about which we shall have more to say further on.

In perfect harmony with what we have just quoted from Mr. Darby are the words of F. W. Grant in the "Numerical Bible": "But apart from all this, his (Matthew's) primary theme is the connection of the Lord with Israel's Messianic hopes and promises; and though on that very account he has to show also that "He came to His own and His own received Him not," and how consequently the "kingdom of heaven would be taken from them," and assume the mystery-form in which it was unknown to the prophets of Israel, yet still we are not left in uncertainty as to the final issue, when, at the coming of the Son of Man from heaven, the "elect nation will be gathered from the four lands to their ancient land again" (xxiv:30, 31).

Before we look at some of the details of Matthew's Gospel a few general remarks are needed concerning

I. The Kingdom.

As we are addressing ourselves to those who are familiar with the subject before us a few words will suffice for that aspect of our theme which may be designated the Kingdom foretold in Old Testament prophecy. In the second chapter of Daniel we find the prophet interpreting a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. There we learn that during the times of the Gentiles there should be four consecutive world-kingdoms, namely, the Babylonian Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman. These

were to be followed by a fifth, as we read in verse xliv: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." This Kingdom is the Messianic Kingdom which shall be set up on the earth at the return of God's Son to it. Proof of our last assertion is furnished by Dan. vii:13, 14, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and *His Kingdom* that which shall not be destroyed." It was to this same Kingdom that the angel referred when he said to Mary, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, shalt call His Name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him *the throne* of His father David. And He shall reign over the House of Jacob forever; and of *His Kingdom* there shall be no end" (Luke i:31-33). This Kingdom will have the Lord Jesus Christ for its sovereign (Isa. ix:6, 7), Jerusalem will be its earthly center (Is. ii:3), the House of Jacob will be its immediate subjects (Luke i:33), though the whole earth and its inhabitants will be subject to its rule (Zech. xiv:16).

In an exceedingly able and lucid article which appeared in the October, 1918, "Our Hope," Dr. W. J. Erdman shows that the Messianic Kingdom has a sevenfold designation in the New Testament. It is denominated "the Kingdom of God" (Luke xix:11), the "Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. iii:2), thy "Father's Kingdom" (Matt. xxvi:29), the "Kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. i:13), the "Kingdom of the Son of Man" (Matt. xvi:28), the "Kingdom of Christ" (Rev. xi:15), the "Kingdom of David" (Mark xi:10).

The question has often been raised as to whether or not the two expressions "the Kingdom of Heaven" and "the Kingdom of God" are one and the same. An affirmative answer is the one that is usually given. The fact that the parallel passages in Mark and Luke employ "Kingdom of God" where "Kingdom of Heaven" is given by Matthew appears to be conclusive proof. Yet to be really accurate we do not think it is strictly correct to say that they are *synonymous*. Personally, we prefer to express it thus: the Kingdom of God is a *generic* term which *includes* in its force and scope all the other designations of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven *must be* the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God is not necessarily always the same as the Kingdom of Heaven, or why are both the terms employed by Matthew? If Matthew had spoken only of the Kingdom of Heaven and Mark and Luke only of the Kingdom of God there might have been good reason for concluding the two expressions were absolutely identical, but the fact that Matthew five times over refers to the Kingdom of God in a

book where the Kingdom of heaven is mentioned thirty-two times surely intimates that the two terms are to be distinguished no matter how closely they may resemble each other in certain respects. That in certain respects the two expressions *are* very similar in their scope is clear, and that some of the things predicated of the former are also predicated of the latter cannot be denied, yet the additional fact that "the Kingdom of Heaven" which occurs so frequently in Matthew's Gospel—the special design of which is to set forth the offer of the Messianic Kingdom to the Jews, their refusal to comply with the terms of its offer, and the consequences ensuing from their refusal—is never once used by Mark, Luke or John, ought to show that it *does* bear a different significance from "the Kingdom of God" which is the phrase invariably employed by the other Evangelists. The method of quoting certain passages in Mark and Luke where the expression "Kingdom of God" occurs which are parallel with those passages where "the Kingdom of Heaven" is used by Matthew can only be characterized as *superficial*, for while such a course shows the two "Kingdoms" (or rather, the two aspects of the one Kingdom) have certain things in common, it by no means proves they are synonymous terms. The Kingdom of God, as administered in Israel of old, whether in the immediate theocracy or by Saul, or David and his sons, was *not* the "Kingdom of Heaven," for its center of dominion and throne were on the earth.

As we shall yet seek to show, "the Kingdom of Heaven" in the first twelve chapters of Matthew has an entirely different force and scope from what it has in the later chapters. In Matthew the Kingdom which John announced as "at hand" was the Messianic Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, whereas in the Parables of Matthew xiii, etc., the "Kingdom of Heaven" has reference to the Christian profession. Yet both of these significations of the Kingdom of Heaven are spoken of as the Kingdom of God in the other Gospels. It would therefore be scriptural to say that the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew iii is the Kingdom of God, as it would be to say that the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew xiii is the Kingdom of God also, but it would not be accurate to say of other Scriptures that the Kingdom of God is *synonymous* with the Kingdom of Heaven except we qualified our words by adding *which aspect* of the Kingdom of Heaven we were referring to. For instance, when we read in Rom. xiv:17 "for the *Kingdom of God* is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," the Kingdom of God cannot here be the equivalent of the Kingdom of Heaven which the Baptist announced as per Matt. iii:2, but it would correspond with the Kingdom of Heaven as it is used in the parables of Matt. xiii providing we understood by it *the reality* of that which is there professed. We trust we have succeeded in making clear the distinction between the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God as they are employed in the New Testament.

Again: it is essential that we distinguish between the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Heavenly Kingdom"—"And the Lord shall deliver

me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto *His Heavenly Kingdom*" (2 Tim. iv:18). And here we cannot do better than quote from the writings of Mr. W. Hoste: "The term 'heavenly Kingdom' describes that side of the Kingdom in which the heavenly saints will have their part. "The Kingdom of Heaven" is the earthly side of the Kingdom administered from heaven, and going on as we see in Matthew xiii, even now in mystery. In the latter a saved Israel and spared Gentile nations will share. These two aspects of the Kingdom are like the upper and lower stories of the same mansion. . . . I believe that the meaning of the disputed words in John iii:12, is to be found in the difference here drawn. "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things." The contrast here is not between the "new birth" and "eternal life." New birth is from above and is essentially a heavenly thing. Nor, is this contrast found at all, as I judge, in the former and latter parts of our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus. The contrast is rather between what the Lord had *previously annonnced to the Pharisees* as the representatives of the nation—"The Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (this was an earthly hope for an earthly people)—and the truth that the Lord was propounding all through Nicodemus, which was of a different order and on a heavenly plane—the new birth and the possession of eternal life. Entrance into the Kingdom of God in its true and spiritual character entailed "a birth from above!" The words of the Lord, in fact, were in view of the *darkness of Nicodemus who represented the Pharisees as a class.* "If you do not believe My simple testimony as regards the national hope of Israel, how could you be expected to believe when I tell you of a spiritual Kingdom?"

Ere closing this section it would be well for us to state that the Greek word for "Kingdom" is "Basileia." According to the most competent scholars this word has reference to *sovereignty* rather than *territory*, to the *sphere* of its exercise rather than to its *extent*. To illustrate: France was once a Kingdom, but to-day is a Republic. But there has been no *territorial* change; the country is the same, and it is inhabited by the same race of people. Yet it is no more a Kingdom for the simple reason that it no longer has a King reigning over it; instead, it is governed by the "public" who are sovereign. When, therefore, the Baptist announced the "Kingdom of Heaven" as "at hand" he had no regard to a Heavenly Kingdom, that is a Kingdom the territory of which was in *Heaven*, but, instead, he referred to a Kingdom which was to be set up on earth, but which should be governed from *Heaven*. In other words, this expression, "The Kingdom of Heaven," as used by John and our Lord (at the beginning of His ministry) was the exact equivalent of the Old Testament phrase, "The heavens do rule" (see Dan. iv:26).

We shall consider next,

II. The Messiah's Forerunner.

Old Testament prediction had made known the fact that Israel's Messiah should be preceded by one who went before Him to "prepare

His way" (see Is. ix:3; Mal. iii:1). The *character* of the Forerunner's ministry was clearly defined by Gabriel's words to his father Zacharias: "And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke i:17). The meaning of this utterance is surely not hard to perceive. The ministry of Elijah is described at length in the Old Testament. Elijah appeared at a time when Israel was being dominated by a foreign and heathen queen, when the nation's spirituality was at a low ebb, when but an insignificant remnant remained true to God. Similar was it in the days of John. Elijah came not with a message of grace, but to enforce God's righteous demands; he came not with "precious promises" upon his lips; rather did he appear in Israel's midst sternly calling on the people to forsake Baal and return to Jehovah, their God. So it was with our Lord's forerunner. But the declaration that the Baptist should go before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah not only looked back to the past history of the Tishbite, but also looked forward to his ministry in a coming day, for God made known through Malachi that Elijah will yet return to this earth and testify again in the midst of Israel—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. iv:5, 6). These words show that Elijah's future mission is closely connected with the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom, inasmuch as he appears before the coming of "the great and dreadful Day of the Lord," that is, the time of Jacob's trouble, the Great Tribulation, when the vials of God's wrath will be poured forth on the earth and Israel be punished double for all her sins.

In saying that John would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, Gabriel gave intimation that the Baptist's ministry would be similar in character and scope to that of the Tishbite in a coming day. Just as Elijah will preach in view of the approach of the Messianic Kingdom and will seek to make ready a people for the Lord, so John announced the nearness of the same Kingdom and called upon the Jews to take that place before God which was necessary to fit them for communion with their King. It is thus we are to understand John's message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii:2). Confirmatory of what we have just said that Luke i:17 supplies the key to the character of the Baptist's ministry, are the words of our Lord as recorded in Matt. xi:13, 14—"For all the prophets and the law prophesied unto John. And if ye will receive it (rather, "him"), this is Elijah, which was for to come." We take it that these words mean that if the Jews had allowed John to do the work of Elijah, he would have been an Elijah unto them, and in that case the Great Tribulation would have at once followed and been succeeded by the then setting up of the Messianic Kingdom. John had come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had the Jews responded to his appeal he would have done the work of an Elijah among them, and so have prepared the way for

the appearing of their King in His glory some seven years after His humiliation **and** death. But, of course God had foreknown that the condition of the Jews at this time would render it impossible for John to accomplish this work; hence, He had previously announced that He would send Elijah to do so a little before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. By the words, "*If ye will receive him,*" the Lord threw upon the Jews themselves the whole of the responsibility for the long delay and weary exile of nineteen centuries. It must be noted that our Lord was speaking *hypothetically*. What he said was, "*If ye will receive him.*" He was addressing them not from the standpoint of God's eternal counsels, but in view of *their responsibility*. The preaching of John the Baptist failed to bring about the Nation's "repentance," and consequently, *after his death*, when the offer had passed, the Lord said, "Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that an Elijah* is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them" (Matt. xvii:12). Following which we read, "Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of *John the Baptist*." Here the appearing of Elijah is said to be still in the future, and we are told that he will do what (hypothetically) John might have done, but did not, that is, bring back the Chosen People from apostasy. As Mr. Gaebelien says in his commentary on Matthew —than which we know of none which is its equal—"John the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the way-preparer, the one in whom the last prophecy in Malachi *might* have been fulfilled, but they did not know him. His rejection was the prelude to the rejection of the Lord. John surely was the Elijah for that time." Finally, it should also be remarked that our Lord's words in Matt. xxi:32 give further verification of our comments upon the *character* of John's ministry, for we read there not that he came in the way of "grace" but that he came "in the way of righteousness."

We shall now examine briefly what is told us of John's ministry in Matt. iii. "In those days came John the Baptist," preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (verses 1, 2). Due consideration should be given to the fact that the Baptist appeared in the midst of a nation that was thoroughly permeated with Phariseeism, that was blind to their real state before God, and that boasted they were the Children of Abraham yet neither exhibited his faith nor brought forth his works. It was in perfect keeping with their moral condition, therefore, that John appeared not in Jerusalem but in the *wilderness*—symbolic of the spiritual barrenness of those whom he addressed.

The Baptist's call to Repentance was the demand that his hearers take their true place before God, and that was the place of *death* which

*The absence of the definite article in the Greek makes it permissible to supply the indefinite "*an Elijah.*"

the Jordan, in which he baptized, typified. Only thus could John "prepare the way of the Lord," prepare it by making ready a people fit to receive Him; made ready, as we have said, by the sentence of judgment which they passed on themselves. Such were the terms of Isaiah's prophecy which the Baptist was to fulfill—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low;* and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Is. ix:3, 4). The words we have put in italics signified that lowness would be exalted and pride abased. The response to God's call through John is stated in Luke vii:29, 30—the common people responded, but the religious leaders rejected the "counsel of God."

"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." There are some Bible teachers who argue that under this expression the Baptist was announcing the Christian Dispensation which began on the Day of Pentecost, but this view is quite untenable, as is clear from many considerations. First, the predominant characteristic of Christianity is *Grace* and the Message to be proclaimed throughout the Christian Dispensation is "the Gospel of God's *Grace*." But as we have seen, John was not a preacher of "grace," instead, he appeared in "the spirit and power of *Elijah*, who was silent about grace in the days of Ahab and who, so far as Scripture reveals, will have nothing to say about "grace" when he returns to the earth just before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; while, furthermore, our Lord tells us that John came not in the way of "grace" but in the "way of *righteousness*" (Matt. xxi:32). Again, if the Kingdom of Heaven which John announced was a proclamation of the Christian Dispensation, how can we account for the fact that seeing in this Christian Dispensation God is dealing specially with the *Gentiles* (see Acts xv:14; Rom. xi:25, etc.) that Luke's, which is essentially the *Gentile* Gospel, omits all reference to the "Kingdom" when describing John's ministry? According to the theory we are now combatting, the words found in Matt. iii:2 ought to have been recorded by Luke rather than by Matthew. No; the Kingdom of Heaven which John heralded was not the Christian Dispensation, but the Messianic foretold by the prophets. This is clear from the fact that Matthew—who alone presents the distinctive Jewish and Dispensational features of our Lord's ministry—is the only one of the four Evangelists who informs us that the Baptist proclaimed the "Kingdom" as at hand. Neither Mark, Luke, nor John say a word about the "Kingdom" in connection with the Baptist and his ministry! But we shall leave for a later section of this article a more detailed consideration of the expression, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" and a more extended refutation of the above mentioned theory.

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. And were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. iii:5, 6). The baptism of John confirmed his preach-

ing. He baptized "unto repentance," and in "Jordan," the river of death. Those who responded to his call came "confessing their sins," of which death was the just due. But let it be said with emphasis, John's baptism *was not Christian baptism*, for Christian baptism could not be inaugurated until after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, Christian baptism being a baptism unto His "death" (see Rom. vi:3, 4). Here is further proof that John had *not* appeared to announce the dawning of the Christian Dispensation—in view of such an hypothesis it is absolutely unthinkable that those at Ephesus who had received his baptism should need *re-baptising* (see Acts xix:1-5).

Next we read of many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to John's baptism, to whom he said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth forth not good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (verses 7-10). The symbolism of the last verse is easily interpreted—the "trees" were those Jews who, in the pride of their self-righteousness, refused to be baptized as sinners.

"I indeed baptize you with water *unto repentance*; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire" (verse 11). Concerning this verse we cannot do better than quote the pertinent comments on it of J. N. Darby—"Observe that John the Baptist did not present the Messiah as the Saviour come in grace (italics ours), but as the Head of the Kingdom, as Jehovah, who would execute judgment if the people did not repent." And in regard to the words "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" we subjoin a quotation from "The Numerical Bible:"

"It is evident that our Lord is but *applying* the words here, when He says to the disciples after His resurrection: 'John truly baptized, with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence' (Acts i:5). Here is the same contrast of water with spirit, yet the same term, 'baptism,' applied to each; while the Spirit in the day of Pentecost when these words were fulfilled did not connect itself with water, nor were those to whom they were spoken baptized with water at that time at all. It is certain, also, that these disciples were born again *before* Pentecost, and that this baptism, therefore, was not their new birth. Scripture, if we pay the least heed to it, easily delivers us from such strange delusions. On the other hand, clearly at Pentecost the Christian Church began, and this is the 'Church which is Christ's body' (Eph. i:22, 23); while, in exact agreement with this we are told (1 Cor. xii:13) that 'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.' Thus the baptism of the Spirit is not that by which men are new-born, but that by which those already new-born become members

of the body of Christ. It is not the beginning of the Spirit's work in souls, but a further, and yet in an important sense an initial work. It does not follow, however, from the way in which Christianity has fulfilled this prophecy of John that he knew anything of the Church as the body of Christ. It is certain that this was a revelation of a *later date*, and necessarily *hidden from him* (Eph. iii:3-6). It is certain, because Scripture declares it (1 Pet. i:10-12), that prophets might be led of the Spirit to utter what was quite beyond their own intelligence. But more than this, it does not follow, because Christianity has fulfilled this in a certain way, *that there may not be ANOTHER fulfillment of it, Israelitish and not Christian*, in those days to which the Baptist seems to point on, when Israel will be God's threshing-floor and finally purged, according to the Lord's own prophecy at an after-time. There does not seem, at least, any reason why the outpouring of the Spirit upon Israel and the nations in millennial times, of which Joel and others plainly speak, should not be called a 'baptism,' as initiating for them that state of blessing which will then be theirs. Such double accomplishments of prophecy are by no means rare. It agrees with this thought that John *puts alongside* (italics ours throughout) of this baptism of the Spirit, the baptism of fire; which finds its explanation in what directly follows: 'He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' "

Ere closing this section we shall give another quotation, from the writings of William Kelly, not because we would buttress our own remarks by an appeal to human authority, but in order to show that what we have advanced is in full accord with the teachings of some of the ablest Bible students and men most deeply taught of God which He has given to His Church, and so that those of our readers who are not familiar with the works of these brethren may get the benefit of their thoughts.

" 'Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Here we have an expression which must not be passed over—all-important as it is for the understanding of the Gospel of Matthew. John the Baptist preached the nearness of this Kingdom in the wilderness of Judea. It was clearly gathered from the Old Testament prophecy, particularly from Daniel, that the God of Heaven would set up a Kingdom; and more than this, that the Son of Man was the Person to administer the Kingdom. 'And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed!' Such was the Kingdom of Heaven. It was not a mere Kingdom of the earth, neither was it in Heaven, but it was heaven governing the earth forever. It would appear that in John the Baptist's preaching it, we have no ground for supposing that either he believed at this time, or that any other men till afterwards were led into the understanding of the form which it was to assume through Christ's rejection and going on high

as now. This our Lord divulged more particularly in chapter thirteen of this Gospel. I understand, then, by this expression, what might be gathered justly from Old Testament prophecies; and that John, at this time, had no other thought but that the Kingdom was about to be introduced according to expectations thus formed. They had long looked for the time when the earth should no longer be left to itself, but heaven should be the governing power; when the Son of Man should control the earth; when the power of hell should be banished from the world; when the earth should be put into association with the heavens, and the heavens, of course, therefore, be changed so as to govern the earth directly through the Son of Man who should be also King of restored Israel. This, substantially, I think, was in the mind of the Baptist. But then he proclaims repentance; not here in view of deeper things, as in the Gospel of Luke, but as a spiritual preparation for Messiah and the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, he calls man to confess his own ruin in view of the introduction of that Kingdom. Accordingly, his own life was the witness of what he felt morally of Israel's then state. He retires into the wilderness, and applies to himself the ancient oracle of Isaiah—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness." The reality was coming; as for him, he was merely one to announce the advent of the King. All Jerusalem was moved, and multitudes were baptized by him in Jordan. This gives occasion to his stern sentence upon their condition in the sight of God." We shall now consider:

III. The Divine Incarnation and its Purposes.

What was the specific design or designs which the Son of God had before Him in taking upon Him the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men? The Scriptures answer this question very definitely and teach that the purposes of the Divine Incarnation were manifold, but which, however, we can concisely reduce to two or three fundamental postulates. Primarily, the Word became flesh in order that the Will of God might be done—"Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God" (Heb. x:7). The ultimate goal in the accomplishment of that "will" was that the Lord Jesus should offer Himself as a Sacrifice for sin. He had received a "commandment" from the Father to lay down His life (John x:18, 19), a commandment which required that He should become "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii:8). It was thus God was to be "glorified" by the obedience of His own Beloved Son. So much for the *Divine* side. From the *human* side Christ Jesus came into the world to "save sinners" (1 Tim. i:15). Thus it was that the angel said unto Joseph, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i:21). Here, then, briefly stated, was the *fundamental* purpose of the Divine Incarnation. The Son of God was made in the likeness of sinful flesh in order that God might be glorified by his obedience unto death, and in order that His people might be saved from their sins. And so far as we are aware no Bible teacher of orthodox repute has ever called this in question or sought to cast doubt upon it. To the above named essential

purposes may be linked that which is set forth in Heb. ii:14 and 1 John iii:8—the Lord of Glory came to earth to “destroy” the Devil and his works.

Above we have stated, briefly, the *fundamental* purposes of the Divine Incarnation, and we are now at a loss to find a word which may appropriately be used as an antithesis of “fundamental.” To speak of the “incidental” purposes of the Divine Incarnation is certainly incongruous, if not altogether unwarrantable. Perhaps it will be better to say that to glorify God, save sinners, and destroy the Devil and his works, did not exhaust the program before our incarnate Lord. Scripture also tells us that He came to earth as “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy” (Rom. xv:8, 9). Others set forth this same truth in other words. On seeing the Christ Child in the temple, Simeon took Him in his arms and said, “Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people. A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke ii:30–32). His mission to Israel was clearly stated Himself when He said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel” (Matt. xv:24). These words cover His earthly ministry (as set forth by Matthew), for during the days of His flesh He never went forth on an errand of mercy to Greece or Rome, nor would He suffer His apostles to go in the “way of the Gentiles” (Matt. x:5). But after His death and resurrection He became a Light to lighten the Gentiles and bade His apostles make disciples of “all nations,” but this, be it noted, was not until *after* Israel had despised and rejected both Himself and His message. It is, however, with our Lord’s relationship with the Jews we are now particularly concerned.

The first thing we are told in Matthew’s Gospel concerning our Lord’s ministry is found in iv:17—“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, *Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*” In chapter one we have His genealogy and a brief account of His birth. In chapter two we learn of the visit of the wise men to worship the infant King, and of the flight into Egypt and the subsequent return to Nazareth. In chapter three we are given a brief word concerning the work of John the Baptist and of our Lord’s baptism by him. And now in chapter four, following the description of the Temptation, we are introduced to the commencement of our Lord’s personal ministry. After we are told what formed the subject matter of His preaching, we behold Him calling four of the apostles, and then we read, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the *Gospel of the Kingdom*, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (iv:23). What, then, are we to understand by the terms “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” and “the *Gospel of the Kingdom?*” It will be noted that the terms of our Lord’s message are identical with those of the Baptist (see iii:2). “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Surely the precise significance of

this expression is not difficult to determine. *The personal presence of the King in their midst* was the verification of this assertion. If the King Himself was actually present in the land, then the "Kingdom" "*must be*" at hand, seeing that the power and glories of the Kingdom were centered in Him. The "Gospel of the Kingdom" was, then, the blessings and glories of the *Messianic Kingdom*. It is to be noted that *this Gospel* will be preached again *after* the Rapture of the Church (see Matt. xxiv:14), which is proof positive that it is *quite distinct* from Christianity. Both the above expressions are peculiar to Matthew and must be interpreted in harmony with Matthew's presentation of Christ as "the Son of David." It was as *King of the Jews* that Old Testament prediction revealed Him (Zech. ix:9). It was as the One unto whom the Lord God would give "*the Throne of His father David*" that Gabriel announced Him to Mary (Luke i:32). It was as "*King of the Jews*" He was first heralded in the royal city by the wise men from the East (Matt. ii:2). It was as "*King of Israel*" that He was hailed by Nathaniel" (John i:49). It was as "*King*" He entered Jerusalem when He accepted the "*Hosannahs*" of the assembled multitudes (John xii:13). It was as "*King*" He represented Himself in His parabolic teaching (Matt. xviii:23; xxv:34). Finally, it was as "*the King of the Jews*" He was crucified (Matt. xxvii:37).

From a number of reasons which we shall state we are compelled to believe that our Lord's message, "Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" signified that *an offer of the Messianic Kingdom, as foretold by the Old Testament prophets, was then being made to the Jews.* Let us remark that it is of the utmost importance that we pay careful attention to the word "*Repent*" here. In this call to Repentance, our Lord, as the Baptist before Him had done, *laid down the fundamental terms on which the Kingdom was being offered to Israel.* The Call to Repentance was for the descendants of Abraham to judge themselves for their sins as well as for the iniquities of their fathers. The demand was that the Jews should take the place of guilty but contrite sinners before God. For it was only on the fulfillment of *this condition* that God would save Israel from their enemies and from the hand of all that hated them (Luke i:71). It was only thus that God could once more dwell in their midst; it was only thus that their sins could be blotted out and the Times of Refreshing come from the presence of the Lord (Acts iii:19). Having given what we believe to be the true meaning of the words, "Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," we shall now set forth as briefly as possible some of the reasons which appear to necessitate the above understanding of John's and our Lord's message.

Reasons for Believing that Matt. iv:17 Set Forth an Offer of the Messianic Kingdom.

1. Because our Lord was addressing Himself to a *Jewish audience*, which, in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures, would naturally and necessarily understand Him to be referring to the *Messianic*

Kingdom. It is inconceivable that He in whose mouth was found no guile should employ a term which He knew would *mislead* His auditors, and if, when preaching, "Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," He had *no reference* to any kingdom foretold by the Israelitish prophets, then He certainly *did* mislead them, as is clear from two considerations: First, from the fact that the Jewish multitudes *did*, even though temporarily, recognize and own Him as their King (John xii:13); and second, because that He "made Himself King" was one of the specific charges brought against Him at His trial (see Luke xxiii:2; John xix:12).

2. Because we know from other Scriptures that the Repentance of Israel is the primary condition (from the human side) which must be met by them *before* the Messianic Kingdom is set up. We cite two passages in proof of our assertion. After our Lord's ascension to heaven a further offer of the Messianic Kingdom was made to Israel by God (in answer to Christ's prayer from the Cross—"Father, forgive them"), as is clear from the third chapter of the Acts, though like the previous one, this too, was rejected, and subsequently withdrawn at their murder of Stephen—which appears to have fulfilled our Lord's words in Luke xix:14. From Acts iii we learn that Peter, addressing "the Men of Israel," v. 12, said, "*Repent ye*, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. *And He shall send Jesus Christ*, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive *until* the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (vv. 19-21)—a manifest reference to the Messianic Kingdom. The times of refreshing and the times of restitution refer to the Millennial reign of the Messiah, and until this is inaugurated the Lord Jesus must remain in Heaven; but had there been a general response to this appeal to Repentance, God would have sent back Jesus Christ to Israel—how soon will be considered later. The particular point we would emphasize in this connection is that God promised to send back Jesus Christ, and the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom awaits His return—contingently on Israel's "repentance." Therefore, we say above that our Lord's works in the days of His flesh—"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," *oblige* us to understand that He was stating the terms on which the *Messianic Kingdom* was being offered to the Jews—Acts iii:19-21 interpreting it. Another Scripture which also confirms this interpretation is found in Zech. xii:10, "And I will pour upon the House of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall *mourn* for Him, as one mourneth for his only Son, and shall be in *bitterness* for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Here we learn that the Jews shall look upon their Messiah, and that they shall "mourn" for

Him and be in "bitterness"—how bitterly they shall mourn the verses that follow reveal. Here then is the "godly sorrow" which "*worketh repentance to salvation*" (2 Cor. vii:10) wrought in Israel immediately prior to the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom.

3. Our next argument is based upon an *inference*, but to us it seems an inference from which there is no escape. Our inference is drawn from our Lord's parable of the Marriage Supper as found in Matt. xxii:1-14—a passage we refrain from quoting through lack of space, but which we would ask our readers to please look up. In this parable our Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a "Marriage" ("Supper," compare Luke xiv:16) which a certain King made for His Son. His servants were sent forth to call them who were bidden to the wedding, but they would not come. Again, He sent forth other servants but they called to the invited guests in vain; in fact, the servants were spitefully treated and slain. In consequence, the King was wrath, and sent forth His armies and slew these murderers and burned up their city—a manifest reference to the destruction of *Jerusalem* in A. D. 70, proving that the "bidden" guests were the *Jews*. Later, the King sent forth other servants who gathered in from the highways as many as they found—a reference to the Calling of the Gentiles—and the Wedding was furnished with guests. From this parable it is clear that *an offer* to the Marriage Supper (which immediately precedes our Lord's return to earth to set up the Messianic Kingdom, (see Rev. xix:7) was extended to the *Jews*, and the plain and unmistakable inference is that if those who were originally "bidden" had presented themselves without delay, the guest-chamber would have been filled, and the Supper have then shortly taken place.

4. Finally, for our limitations of space forbid us subjoining additional arguments, *a process of elimination compels us* to understand the Lord's words found in Matt. iv:17 as we have interpreted them above. We know of only one other alternative which has been put forth by other expositors that need now be noticed. It has been argued that under the term "the Kingdom of Heaven" our Lord was announcing the *Christian Dispensation*, which began on the Day of Pentecost. But it seems to us that this alternative is absolutely untenable, and that, among others, for the following reasons: First, Because the Baptist before Him announced the same "Kingdom of Heaven" and the Baptist's ministry was clearly the subject of Old Testament prediction. But the Old Testament knows nothing whatever of Christianity! Second, Because the Baptist is distinctly said to have gone before Christ in the Spirit and power of "Elijah," and these words are quite meaningless if John came to announce Christianity. Third, Because when sending forth the twelve on their first mission the Lord forbade them going in the way of the Gentiles and even commanded them not to enter any city of the Samaritans (Matt. x:5), and such a restriction is unthinkable if He had come with the primary and specific intention of pro-

claiming the immanency of the Christian Dispensation, wherein all national distinctions are obliterated! Fourth, Because if the Kingdom of Heaven in Matt. iv:17 signified the Christian Dispensation, this expression would surely be found in the *Acts* and *Epistles* which treat of the Christian Dispensation; but they will be searched in vain for a single mention of it! Thus it will be seen that the attempt to make "the Kingdom of Heaven" in Matt. iii:2 and iv:17 mean the Christian Dispensation is utterly misleading and confusing, because unscriptural and erroneous.

IV. The Messiah's Rejection.

The briefest possible examination of the Messiah's rejection by the Jews as set forth by Matthew obliges us to outline (for we shall attempt little more) the first twelve chapters of his Gospel. That it was their *Messiah and King Israel* rejected is clear from the very first verses. Matthew opens with the statement, "The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." The "Son of David" linked the Lord Jesus with Israel's *Throne* (for it was *David's* "seed" who was, ultimately, to occupy it for ever (2 Sam. vii:12, 13), and the "Son of Abraham" linked Him to Israel's *Land*, for it was to *Abraham* God first covenanted to give it to him and his "seed" forever.

The twenty-third verse of Matt. i is the next which claims our attention, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name *Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is, God with us." This utterance is in perfect keeping with the peculiarly *Jewish* character of this Gospel, though at first sight it would seem more in place in *John's*, which, as is well known, sets forth our Lord's *Deity*. But it was appropriately inserted by the Holy Spirit in *Matthew* because Isaiah had predicted of old that "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, *The Mighty God*, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Is. ix:6). Here then in Jesus Christ was the Child born "*unto*" *Israel*—note "*unto us*," and yet One no less and none Other than "*The Mighty God*." Hence it is that in *Matthew*, the *Jewish* Gospel, we read that the virgin's Son should be called "*Emmanuel*," which means "*God with us*." Mark then the perfect agreement and fulfillment: Isaiah reads "*Unto us a child is born . . . and His Name shall be called . . . the Mighty God*," while Matthew says, "*A virgin shall be with child, . . . and they shall call His Name Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is, *God with us*." Surely none but those wo are blinded by prejudice can fail to see the force of this.

In *Matthew two* an incident is narrated which foreshadowed the entire story of this Gospel. It affords a solemn intimation of the reception which Christ was to meet with and shadows in outline the immediate effects of His mission. He is *despised* by His own people even before they set eyes on Him. The King of the Jews is not seen in the royal city, but in Bethlehem, which was "little" among the

thousands of Judah. His own people were *ignorant* of the fact that Jehovah was in their midst, the chief priests and scribes showed their *indifference* by their failure to accompany the "wise men" in their quest for the young Child, and the civil ruler was filled with *hatred* against Him and sought His life. But, Gentiles from a distant land inquire for Him, anxious to meet and worship Him. How coming events cast their shadows before them!

Having already examined, in part, Matthew *three*, in a previous section, we turn now to consider a statement found in the *fourth* chapter: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum" (verses 12, 13). The casting into prison of the Baptist *tested* the attitude of the Jews toward Christ. John had been announced as His way-preparer. How then would Israel regard his imprisonment? Did they appear before Herod and voice their protests? Did they arise *en masse* and demand his release? Not a hint of this do we find anywhere in the Gospel records. The Jews seemed to be quite indifferent to the fate of the Baptist. And this was a plain indication of how they would look upon the One whom John heralded. In the light of what we have just said the words Jesus "departed into Galilee" appear full of meaning. In leaving Nazareth for Capernaum, our Lord was fulfilling a prophecy of Isaiah, who had foretold that Galilee of the Gentiles should see a great Light. Thus, in leaving Nazareth for Capernaum, consequent on their *contempt* for His forerunner, our Lord was, in typical action, *turning away from the Jews and going unto the Gentiles*. Here then we see illustrated the line of truth which is central to the First Gospel, namely, the Rejection of Christ by the Jews *resulting in blessing being brought to the Gentiles*.

We turn now to offer some remarks on what is known as "*The Sermon on the Mount*" recorded in Matt v:7. The *position* that this "Sermon" occupies in Matthew's Gospel is one of the Keys to its interpretation. Following, as it does, the reference in the previous chapter that "From that time Jesus *began to preach*" (iv:17), we learn that this Discourse was delivered at a very *early* point in His ministry, and, therefore, that it must have been closely connected with His proclamation of the Messianic Kingdom. A careful reading of Matt. v:vii confirms this view. In them we have the manifesto of the King and the laws which His subjects must obey. It is an incisive and most searching setting forth of the spirituality of His Kingdom, and defines the character of those who shall enter in and enjoy it. We would call particular attention to the fact that *Jerusalem* is here referred to *not* in its present disowned and desolate condition, but as "the city of the great King" (v:35)! "In the sermon on the mount we have, then, the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven, with very plain reference to the millennial earth. . . . It is the manifestation of the Kingdom in its inner spirit and holiness, still, of course, as a kingdom to come and not actually come." (F. W. Grant.)

"The Holy Spirit, to carry through the wonderful scope of the first Gospel, has put the words of our Lord together into one continued address to His disciples, in the very midst of the most positive evidences that the King has come and Jehovah is in the midst of His people. When the King is manifest He utters His proclamation. Such is the discourse before us here in Matthew, the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ as King. And if the King proclaims, makes known, His proclamation, it must be concerning the Kingdom which He came to bring, preached, and offered to the people. Let this, then, be the starting-point of our analysis of this discourse. The so-called sermon on the mount is a proclamation concerning the Kingdom, the Magna Charta of the Kingdom of the Heavens." (A. C. Gaebelein.)

"This discourse gives the principles of the Kingdom but supposes the rejection of the King and the position this would bring those who were His, who consequently must look for a *heavenly* reward. . . . We may observe that this discourse is connected with the proclamation of the Kingdom as being near at hand, and that all these principles of conduct are given as characterizing the Kingdom, and as the conditions of entrance into it. No doubt it follows that they are suited to those who have entered it (i.e., in its present 'mystery' form—A. W. P.). But the discourse is pronounced in the midst of Israel before the Kingdom is set up, and as the previous state called for in order to establish, and to set forth the fundamental principles of the Kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contract with the ideas they had formed respecting it. In examining the beatitudes we shall find that this portion in general gives the character of Christ Himself. They suppose two things: The coming possession of the land of Israel by the meek and the persecution of the faithful remnant, really righteous in their ways, and who asserted the rights of the true King (heaven being set before them as the hope to sustain their hearts). This will be the portion of the remnant in the last days before the introduction of the Kingdom." (J. N. Darby.)

And here we would notice two verses in the "Sermon" which have occasioned expositors of different schools considerable difficulty. In v:5 we read, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit *the earth*" (or "land"); whereas in v:11, 12, we are told, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward *in heaven*." In view of the first of these statements it has been rightly argued that in the "Sermon" our Lord could not have been discoursing of the Heavenly Kingdom, i. e., to those and of those whose citizenship is in heaven." On the other hand, in view of v:12 it has been erroneously asserted that these words show the Messianic and earthly kingdom could not have been before our Lord's mind at this time. What then is the solution of the difficulty and of the seemingly conflicting statements? The answer to this question is of

first importance as it involves the correct understanding of the *scope* of Matt. v:vii.

As we have seen, our Lord was preceded by one who had called upon the Jews to "Repent," and this in view of the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Those who responded to his call, and these were numerous, were baptized in Jordan, "Confessing their sins," and thus far *they* had taken the initial step toward entering the Kingdom. Further, we have seen that our Lord Himself preached the same message and we know from John iv:1 that many more were baptized as the result. We do not doubt, then, that many of those who heard the "Sermon" were among the number who had been baptized.

But now we have to take note of a deeply important fact, namely, that *before* the Messianic Kingdom *could be* "established" the King Himself had to be crucified, or, as Daniel expresses it, He had to be "cut off" (ix:26). Furthermore, after His death and resurrection, He would return to heaven as Ps. lxxviii:18 fore-announced. Moreover, the unfulfilled seventieth week of Daniel (ix:27) *must* first run its course ere the times of refreshing should come from the presence of the Lord. Yet, on the other hand, it is clear that *if* the Nation had responded to the call of Repentance the present long interval of nineteen hundred years would have been *omitted*, and in that case the seventieth week of Daniel would have followed right on after the sixty-ninth *without any break.** We say, "If the Nation had responded:" really it would be more correct to say, if there had been a *more general* response, for Daniel's prophecies make it clear that a section of the nation, at least, would be in sympathy with the Anti-christ when he appeared. In such case as supposed above, those who *had* responded would have taken the place of what is now the *future* "godly remnant," i. e., Jews in the tribulation, and would have passed through part of the seventieth week and then been slain for their testimony to the real Christ. In other words, they would have been left on earth during the time Christ was in heaven, following His ascension, to suffer the "persecution" of the Anti-christ, many of whom would have been slain, and it was for *their* encouragement our Lord said Matt. v:12. "In verse 12 a reward in heaven is promised to those who suffer for Christ, true for us now, and in some sort of those who shall be slain for His sake in the last days, who will have their place in heaven, although they were a part of the Jewish remnant and not the Assembly. *The same are found in Dan. vii*" (J. N. Darby.)

We understand, then, that the Sermon on the mount describes the character of those who shall enter the Messianic Kingdom and enjoy its blessedness, and that it is designed particularly for the guidance and encouragement of *repentant* Jews who are awaiting the advent of their King, setting forth as it does the principles which

*As to how it is possible to harmonize these statements with God's eternal purpose concerning the One Body, we leave for consideration to section six of this paper.

are to regulate their conduct during the time of His absence. We regard Matt. v:6 as a definition of one of the spiritual characteristics which will be required of those Jews who shall enter the Millennial Kingdom; while we consider v:11, 12 as referring to a certain section of the godly Jewish remnant who will be slain during the tribulation and who will be rewarded with a *heavenly* place and blessing, see Dan. vii:18, 22, 27, and particularly Rev. xx:2 which shows them linked with these who have part in the First Resurrection and also as "reigning with Christ." But we also believe that the greater part of the "Sermon" applies to and may be appropriated by those who are now in the Kingdom in its "mystery" form, that is, by those who are the present people of God on the earth—it is obvious that Christianity cannot require a *lower* morality than Christ enforces throughout the Sermon. In saying this we are not making an arbitrary assertion, but one that is in full harmony with New Testament teaching. All Scripture is given to the Church and is profitable for its instruction, though not all Scripture is addressed to or written about the Church. We are well aware that some have pushed Dispensational 'dividing' of the Word of Truth to unwarrantable lengths, and with their extreme positions we have no sympathy. We go so far as to say that many of the *Old Testament promises* may be legitimately appropriated by the Church of God today and we are prepared to prove this assertion by the Word of God itself. In writing to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Cor. i:1) the apostle said, "*Having these promises, dearly beloved,*" etc. (2 Cor. vii:1). What promises? Plainly those recorded in the verses immediately preceding, i. e., 2 Cor. vi:17, 18. And where are "*these promises*" to be found? The answer is, *in the Old Testament!* Here, then, we have set forth and illustrated a principle which is of wide application, and which certainly warrants us in applying to ourselves the greater part of Matt. v:7. What, then, is to determine the limitation? How are we to know where to draw the line: what we may apply to ourselves to day from the Old Testament and from the Gospels and what *not* to apply? The answer is very simple: We are justified in applying to ourselves anything which would not conflict with the teaching of the *Church Epistles*; we are warranted in applying to ourselves *everything* which is in *harmony* with these later writings. Does Matt. v:44 say, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"? Then Romans xii:14, 20, also says, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." On the other hand, may I appropriate to myself Matt. v:5—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth?" and the answer is, No, for Phil. iii:20 declares, "For our citizenship is *in heaven*." We refrain from offering further examples, but trust we have succeeded in making clear the principle which is to control our application of all Scripture which is not directly addressed to those who are members of the Body of Christ.

Following Matthew's account of the Sermon on the mount we find our Lord ministering to the needy, relieving the distressed, healing the sick. Matthew *eight and nine* form as distinct a section of this Gospel as do chapters v:7. It should be noted that in these two chapters ten specific miracles are detailed. This number is highly significant, inasmuch as it is the numeral of ordinal completeness, and in Scripture signifies full *human responsibility*—compare the *ten* commandments which measure it. As it is the responsibility of the Jews which is here seen tested, we can readily see why Matthew was moved to record just the number of miracles which he did.

The miracles of our Lord are to be regarded not only as exhibitions of Divine power (which they were), but specially as part of His Messianic credentials. The execution of these wonders was one of the marks by which Israel's Messiah was to be identified (see Is. xxxv:4-6; xlvi:6,7; lxi:1). Hence it was that on the Day of Pentecost Peter said, "Ye men of *Israel*, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you *B Y* miracles and wonders, *and signs*". (Acts ii:22). These miraculous "signs" of the Messiah constituted, therefore, an admirable *test* of Israel, for their response to them defined their attitude toward their King. When, at a later date, the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky: but can ye not discern the *signs of the times*?" (Matt. xvi:3), among other things, He made a definite reference to the wonder signs He had been performing and which, as we have said, were a prominent part of His Messianic credentials. That our Lord's miracles *were* performed for the special benefit of the Jewish nation, and that they were designed as a *test* of the attitude they would assume toward their Messiah King is evident from the following consideration: In Matt. ix:35 we find that our Lord's miracle-signs and His preaching the "Gospel of the Kingdom" are *linked together*—"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, *and* healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Thus we see that these miracle-signs *accompanied* the offer of the Messianic Kingdom to Israel. Limitations of space forbid a detailed examination of each of the ten miracle-signs described in Matthew *eight and nine*, but a few words concerning the earlier ones are called for.

It is a striking fact that the first of the miracle-signs recorded by Matthew is the Cleansing of the Leper. Both Mark and Luke place this miracle at a *later* date, but Matthew, who ignores the *chronological* order of events, gives it the first place in the list of miracles which he narrates. The reasons for this seem to be as follows: First, it was clearly recognized in Israel that Jehovah alone could cure this disease (Num. xii:10; 2 Kings v:7), and therefore in the Cleansing of the Leper Jesus Christ gave proof that He was indeed "the Mighty God;" Second, leprosy was a well recognized type of sin, and in *this* sufferer's physical condition might be discerned a foreshadowment of the Spiritual state

of the Jewish people at this time, the people to whom the Christ had come to minister unto; Third, this miracle, as we see by its immediate sequel, was made a very pointed *test* of the Nation's attitude toward their Messiah. It will be noted that upon cleansing him, the Lord bade the healed one "go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them" (Matt. viii: 4). The "priest" ought at once to have recognized that *Jehovah* was in their midst and have made prompt inquiries after the Lord Jesus Christ. But, so far as the record goes, no impression was made upon the religious leaders of the Nation, and no interest was awakened. Thus, in the absence of the priests' proclamation that *Jehovah* was in the midst of His people to heal and bless them, we learn of Israel's *failure* to recognize and receive their Messiah from the very first miracle recorded by Matthew.

In view of the testing nature of the first miracle, and of Israel's failure under that test, the second miracle recorded here by Matthew becomes profoundly significant. It is that of the healing of the Centurian's servant: healed at a *distance*, and healed by the mere *word* of Christ. In this healing of the *Gentile* servant while Christ was *absent* from the place where he was, we have a clear foreshadowment of *God turning to the Gentiles*, consequent on His Son's rejection by the Jews, and also of the fact that we have nothing but the *Word* during the time of our Lord's absence from the earth. Our Lord's words to "them that followed" in this connection are also deeply important: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (viii:11, 12). Here we are told that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, shall sit down in "The Kingdom of Heaven," which proves beyond a shadow of doubt that, in these earlier chapters, the Kingdom of Heaven has no reference whatever to Christianity or the Christian Dispensation. It is *not true* that these patriarchs have sat down in the Christian Dispensation, nor will they ever do so. But *they will* sit down in the Messianic Kingdom. Hence we say that Matt. viii:12 enables us to fix, unmistakably, the meaning and scope of this expression "The Kingdom of Heaven." Furthermore, note here, that the *Jews*, in contrast with those who shall come from the east and the west, are distinctly said to be "*the children of the Kingdom*" from which, because of their failure to "Repent," they were to be "cast out."

In the third miracle of Matt. viii Christ is seen in the "house" (compare xiii:1), Peter's house, healing his mother-in-law, and this, doubtless, foreshadows our Lord ministering again to Israel consequent upon His return to the earth. Mark how *fleshy ties* are also brought out here—Peter's *wife's mother*. Interesting as it would be to tarry over the remaining seven miracles recorded in Matthew eight and nine, we must now pass on to chapter ten.

In Matthew *ten* we find our Lord sending forth the twelve on their

first mission. We have already pointed out that they were forbidden to go to any save "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It should be further remarked that *they*, too, announced that "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (verse 7). The instructions given by our Lord to the apostles at this time were in full keeping with the distinctive character of their mission, and it is passing strange how any one who gives the slightest heed to what was said to them by Christ can fail to see that every word was in strict keeping with an offer of the Messianic Kingdom being made to the Jews at this time, but that much of what the Lord here said could not possibly have any place in the *Christian Dispensation*. Imagine our foreign missionaries to-day acting on the basis of Matt. x:12, 13—"And when ye come into an house salute it. And if the house be *worthy*, let thy peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you." The reception the Twelve were to meet with was plainly announced by the Lord, "Beware of men for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues," etc. (verse 17).

Ere leaving Matt. x we would call attention to verse 23, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, *till the Son of Man be come.*" Now this verse cannot mean that our Lord was about to follow in the track of the Twelve and would overtake them before they had completed their testimony, for as a matter of fact He *did not* follow them, but on the contrary they returned to Him. Moreover, "*till the Son of Man be come,*" which is the equivalent of "*The Coming of the Son of Man,*" always has reference to His second advent to the earth. The obvious meaning, then, of our Lord's words above, was that He was sending forth these apostles on a mission which in its character and scope (omitting the Christian Dispensation as do Daniel's Seventy Weeks) goes on to the end of the age. If this statement should be challenged, further proof in support of what we have said is found in the preceding verse—"And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake; but *he that endureth to the end shall be saved*" (verse 22). The "End" here spoken of is clearly the end of the Jewish Age, i.e., Daniel's seventieth week, as, is clear by a comparison of Matt. xxiv:13 which it should be noted formed part of the Lord's answer to the disciple's questions of xxiv:3, one of which related to the End of the Jewish Age; hence "the End" of Matt. xxiv:6; 13, 14 must be the End of Daniel's seventieth week. The mission of the Twelve was interrupted by the rejection of their message by Israel, and it is during Daniel's seventieth week that *their unfinished testimony* to the Nation will be taken up again by a part of the godly Jewish remnant, who will preach the Gospel of the Messianic Kingdom, and ere their happy task is completed the Son of Man will appear in their midst. See an able Editorial in October, 1918, "Our Hope" for a more detailed exposition of Matt. x:23.

Turning now to Matt. eleven we find the Baptist sending from his

prison to inquire whether Christ was the One who was to come, or whether Another must be looked for. Following our Lord's reply to John's disciples, we discover Him addressing the multitude, and saying, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least *in* the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (verse 11). This verse has puzzled many, and we know of no better elucidation of it than that found in "The Numerical Bible"—"Plainly it cannot be that even the little one in the Kingdom of Heaven can be greater *morally* than John the Baptist; but then it can hardly be thought that John himself was greater *in this respect* than all the men that had preceded him. *That is not* the point of comparison; it is *the place* given to him as the predicted messenger who was to prepare the way before Messiah. Certainly spiritual greatness could not be wanting in one put in such a position; but that is another thing. All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. They all pointed onward to the time of which John was able to say, "It is just at hand." It was for him to change the whole character of testimony hitherto, and to sound the note of Jubilee announced a Kingdom not of earth but of heaven, and the King Himself was at the door. And *this* being his greatness, it is easy to understand that he would be in the greater *position* who was *in the Kingdom itself* (in contrast with the one who was merely *heralding* it A. W. P.), and could say in the language of the Psalmist anticipating this, "As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God" (Ps. xlvi:8). The Lord's words are commonly taken indeed to refer to the Kingdom in its present Christian and parenthetic character, and no one would deny that such an application could be made. But the testimony as to this was not that given by the Baptist, nor was it yet given when these words were spoken. The Kingdom in this form only began to be spoken of, and in parabolic utterance, when once it was clear that Israel had indeed rejected Him. And that time was now close at hand, and of course foreseen by the Speaker here, but not yet made definitely plain, even to disciples. Everything would indicate to us that the Lord is declaring the blessedness of that of which all the prophets prophesied, and which John himself had announced, and when Israel will be lifted up to a greatness, which has never yet been paralleled in all the history of that favored nation. That they then put it away from them does not in the least affect this application, which relieves all difficulties at once, and yet leaves room for another application. This must, however, as I believe, be a *secondary one.*" (F. W. Grant.)

After His testimony to the Baptist we next find our Lord saying, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows. And saying, 'We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating

and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (verses 16-19). From this we learn how Israel "despised" their Messiah and King. Next we read, "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not" (verse 20). We ask our readers to note particularly that our Lord here says nothing whatever of Israel's failure to "believe," but instead, He throws the emphasis on their failure to "repent" which, as we have seen, was the prime condition on which the Messianic Kingdom was offered to the Jews (iii:2; iv:17)!

We come now to Matthew *twelve*, which marks one of the important crises of the Gospel. Matthew 12 records a great turning-point in our Lord's ministry, and explains to us why, from this point on, Christ's offer of the Messianic Kingdom to the Jew was suspended, and why in the next and later chapters of Matthew the expression, "The Kingdom of Heaven" carries a different significance from its usage in the earlier chapters. We can do little more than barely mention the incidents recorded in this chapter.

Matthew *twelve* opens with the Pharisees criticizing our Lord's disciples because they had plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and informs us of His vindication of their action. Next, we have Him healing the man with the withered hand, also on the Sabbath day. The sequel to this is found in verse 14, "Then the Pharisees went out and held a council how they might *destroy* Him." Here for the first time in Matthew we hear of the hatred of the religious leaders for Christ and of their determination to encompass His death. We read that "when Jesus knew of it, He withdrew Himself from thence; and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all; and charged them that they should not make Him known" (verses 15, 16). Following a quotation from Isaiah xlii we are next told, "Then was brought unto Him one possessed of a devil, blind and dumb; and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw" (verse 22). This was one of the most remarkable public miracles our Lord had wrought. The subject on which it was performed was blind, dumb, and demon-possessed. The startling nature of the miracle made a deep impression on the onlookers, for we read, "And all the people were *amazed* and said, Is not this the Son of David?" (verse 23). The "sign" performed was unmistakable; the credentials of the Messiah and King were plainly exhibited, and the common people present had no hesitation in hailing Him now as "The Son of David." Mark now what follows: "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils" (verse 24). The awfulness of this charge is revealed by the reply which our Lord made on this occasion. He declared that He cast out demons by the Holy Spirit (verse 28), and therefore in accusing Him of performing the miracle "by Beelzebub" they had committed the *unardonable* sin. This is very clear from verses 31, 32—"Wherefore I say

unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven." Having made it plain that the Pharisees had committed the terrible sin for which there is no forgiveness, our Lord, for the first time, says, "*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*" (verse 34).

We are next told that, "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a *sign* from Thee" (verse 38), and this in the light of what is recorded in verse 22! Our Lord answered them by saying, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah" (verse 39). Note once more the reference here to "Repentance"—"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; *because they repented* (in contrast with Israel, who had failed to) at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a Greater than Jonah is here" (verse 41).

Next our Lord utters a parabolic description of *the past, present, and future states of the Jewish nation*, saying, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out, and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. *Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation*" (verses 43-45).

The chapter closes with an incident which, in the light of all that immediately precedes it, is pregnant with meaning. His mother and His brethren came, desiring to speak with Him. But He "answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother (vv. 48-50). Thus He *disowned all fleshly ties*, and gave intimation that henceforth He should be accessible only through a *spiritual* relationship, and by these words of Christ the *breach* between Himself and Israel was fully manifested. The King was "despised and rejected!"

V. The Christian Profession.

In our review of Matt. i-xii, we have witnessed the conflict between the Light and the Darkness becoming increasingly acute, the rejection of the Messiah being more signally manifest as we proceed, the envy and hatred of the religious leaders growing fiercer and viler, all culminating in the dread and fateful decision to put the Savior to death. Furthermore, we have noted that Matthew twelve marks a *break* in our Lord's relations with the Jews, a break *occasioned by* the Pharisees determination to put Him to death, and by their awful sin of blasphemy

against the Holy Spirit, as well as a break evidenced by His disowning of all fleshly ties. Therefore, we need not be surprised to discover that Matthew thirteen begins a new section of the Gospel, marks a new stage in the Lord's ministry, exhibits a new method of His teaching, and sets forth a new revelation, a revelation of truths kept secret from the foundation of the world (v. 35). In view of these things it surely is not strange that in Matt. xiii the expression "The Kingdom of Heaven" also assumes a new significance, one quite distinct from its meaning and scope in the earlier chapters. It must be remembered that Matthew not only describes the offer of the Messianic Kingdom to Israel, but that he also goes on to inform us of the consequences of the Jews' failure to comply with the terms on which the Kingdom was presented to them and of their rejection of the King Himself. And it is in Matthew thirteen that we are first informed of the primary dispensational consequence of Israel's failure, for it is here we are shown that which has taken the place of the Messianic Kingdom during the long interval of its postponement.

Matthew xiii opens with a highly significant action, and one that was fraught with a deep symbolic meaning. We read, "The same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the seaside." How this illustrates and exemplifies what we have said in the last paragraph! What proof it furnishes that our Lord had broken with Israel! What clear intimation it gives us of what was, consequent on Israel's rejection of their Messiah, to now occupy our Lord's attention. "The same day as when the Pharisees had plotted against His life (xii:14). "The same day" as when He had performed the wonderful sign-miracle which "amazed" all the people and caused them to hail Him as "the Son of David" (xii:23). "The same day" as when the religious leaders of the Nation had committed the unpardonable sin (xii:31). "The same day" as our Lord had been asked for a "sign" and to which he replied that none but the judgment sign of Jonah should be vouchsafed them (xii:39). "The same day" as when our Lord pronounced the Jews to be a "wicked generation" (xii:45). Finally, "the same day" as when He had disowned all fleshly ties and announced that only those could claim kinship with Him whodid the will of the Father which is in Heaven, (xii:48-50). "The same day" we read, "*went Jesus out of the House*"—symbolically (and perhaps literally) *the Temple*—"and sat by the *seaside*," figure of the *Gentiles* (see Dan. vii:2; Rev. xvii:15).

Next we read, "And great multitudes were gathered unto Him, so that He went into a ship and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables" (vv. 2, 3). This statement affords us clear evidence that this chapter begins a new section of the Gospel and marks a new stage in our Lord's ministry. *The first twelve chapters of Matthew will be searched in vain for any record of a "parable!"* So surprised were the disciples themselves at this new form of teaching which their Master had adopted that we find they came to Him and said, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?"

(xiii:10). *Why* then did our Lord here, for the first time, employ *this* method of instruction? Fortunately we are not left to our own speculations. The Lord has given a definite reply—see xiii:11-17, 34, 35. The substance of our Lord's answer was that He now taught in “parables” in order to *conceal* His meaning from the multitude, though the disciples themselves should be given to know the *mysteries* of the Kingdom of Heaven, and this affords additional evidence of our Lord's *break* with the Nation—Israel had shown they had no capacity for spiritual things, and it would have been casting pearls before swine to reveal in plain terms to them the deeper things of God.

The remainder of Matt. xiii contains seven parables which the Evangelist has here grouped together. Six of them are introduced by the words “The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto” (vv. 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47), and they are collectively referred to as “The *Mysteries* of the Kingdom of Heaven” (v. 11). And here two queries demand consideration: Why the last six parables should be termed “*Mysteries*,” and why the words “The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto” should be *omitted* from the preface to the *first*? These questions are intimately related. The last six parables of Matt. xiii contain prophetic pictures of what was to become history during the Christian Dispensation, and they are termed “*Mysteries*” or “*Secrets*” because Israel had rejected their King, and this involved His *leaving* the earth and a long absence from it. Thus it is evident *why* the first parable is *not* termed a similitude of the Kingdom. “The Kingdom of Heaven in its present mysterious form, did not commence *till the King went on high*. The “*mysteries*” date from that epoch. The work and action of the first parable was preparatory to the establishing of the Kingdom amongst the Gentiles. It will be the Kingdom in *power* amongst the Jews. It is the Kingdom in *mystery* amongst the Gentiles. The *presence* of the King characterizes the former; the *absence* of the King is the key to the understanding of the latter. The first parable sets forth the lowly action of the Lord *when on earth*—“A sower went forth to sow”—but it is His presence in *heaven* which introduces the ‘*Mysteries*’ of the Kingdom, hence the *first* parable is *not* termed a likeness of the Kingdom” (W. Scott).

We shall next summarize the reasons which compel us to regard the expression “The Kingdom of Heaven,” which in the Parables of Matt. xiii is likened unto certain things, as having a *different* force and scope to that which it bears in the first twelve chapters of this Gospel:

1. Because in view of Israel's refusal to comply with the terms on which the Messianic Kingdom was offered to them, the setting up of it now is in *abeyance*. After the leaders of the Nation had committed the unpardonable sin, our Lord's ministry necessarily underwent a fundamental *change*. Therefore, from Matt. xiii onwards, speaking generally, our Lord looked forward to and discoursed upon that which has now taken the place of the actual establishment of His earthly Kingdom.

2. Because of our Lord's evident *break* with Israel. In Matt. xii:46-

50 He is seen disowning all fleshly ties, and in xiii:1 He is shown "leaving the house" and taking His place by the "seaside." This, in itself, is sufficient to lead us to look now for teaching which concerned the Gentiles rather than the Jews.

3. Because Matt. xiii so evidently begins a new section of the Gospel and therefore must be disconnected from what precedes it. In this chapter we see our Lord adopting a new form of instruction and revealing secrets which had been kept hidden from the foundation of the world. As we have said above, the opening verse of Matt. xiii shows the connection between His action here and the teaching which follows it, revealing the cause which led up to it. Instead of teaching in plain language and simple terms, as hitherto, He now delivers a message in cryptic form, the meaning of which was veiled.

4. Because the Lord Himself tells us that He makes known secrets which had been kept hidden from the foundation of the world; whereas the Messianic Kingdom, which is the central subject of the previous chapters, had been openly foretold by the prophets of Israel. That our Lord here leaves Old Testament ground is sufficient of itself to indicate the change of meaning in the term "Kingdom of Heaven."

5. Because what is predicated of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matt. xiii and onwards is entirely different from and at variance with what had been predicated of it in the earlier chapters. All are agreed that the similitudes of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matt. xiii and onwards treat of the Christian dispensation, whereas, as we have shown, the Kingdom of Heaven in Matt. i-xii deals with the earthly people. For example, Matt. v:5 has no application to the present dispensation. Again: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will not sit down in the Christian dispensation, as they are said to do in "The Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. viii:12).

Having shown that the "Kingdom of Heaven" in Matt. xiii bears a different meaning and scope from its usage in the earlier chapters, it only remains for us here to add a few words concerning its real force and bearing in the second great section of this Gospel. If due heed be given to that which the Kingdom of Heaven is *likened unto* in the parables it will not be difficult to discover its meaning and present application. That the "Kingdom of Heaven" in Matt. xvi and onwards has a wider scope than that of the Church which is the Body of Christ ought not to need arguing. The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field, but in which his enemy came and sowed tares (xiii:24, 25). It is likened unto a net cast into the sea which gathered of "every kind" (xiii:4). It is likened unto a marriage to which, ultimately, the host's servants were instructed to "gather together all as many as they found, both bad and good" (v. 12), so that the wedding might be furnished with guests (xxv:1-10). It is likened unto ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, five of which were wise and five "foolish" and to whom the Lord said, "I know you not" (xxv:1-13). Thus it will be seen that from Matt. xvi and onwards the "Kingdom of Heaven" embraces the whole of Christian truth upon

and contemplates, in a word, *Christendom*. Though distinct from the Church of God the "Kingdom of Heaven" *includes* it, just as the whole is the sum of its parts, and as the greater contains the less. We know of but one verse in the later chapters which appears to clash with this definition, namely, Matt. xviii:3. And here, once more, we avail ourselves of the "Numerical Bible."

"The question was here a more fundamental one than that which they (the disciples) had started. One must *enter* it, in order to be great in it; and ambition could not even *enter*. It is plain that, while merely the ordinary term is used *here*, which applies *both* to the mystery—and the final form of the Kingdom, yet it is of the *latter* both the disciples and the Lord are speaking. They have in mind the time when "greatness" will be estimated by the King, and receive its reward, and the Lord states the necessary condition for even entrance into *it* at that time."

When in Matt. xxiii, where He pronounces His "woes" upon the Pharisees and scribes, our Lord says, "Ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (v. 13). He manifestly *looks back* to the earlier chapters.

VI. Difficulties and Objections.

The nature of this brochure is positive rather than negative. We have sought to give a *constructive* setting forth of our theme rather than reply to all the arguments that have been brought to bear against the position here taken. It will be well, however, to look now at some of the main difficulties and objections which have been raised by various brethren who take a view of the subject entirely different from our own.

1. Attention has been called to the fact that in Matt. i:1 the Lord Jesus is set forth as "The Son of Abraham" as well as "The Son of David," and an attempt has been made to show that the former expression was fulfilled by our Lord at His *first* advent, and that the latter will be fulfilled at His *second* advent. Now, not only does this *reverse* the order of the two titles as recorded in i:1, but the *facts* of the case clearly refute such a theory. A study of Matthew's Gospel should make it very clear that our Lord is *not* here exhibited as fulfilling the Abraham title, but instead, is shown particularly as the Son of David. Seven times (in ix:27, xii:23, xv:22, xx:30, xxi:31, xxi:9, xxi:15) He is addressed as "Son of David," but never once, after the opening verse, is He ever addressed, or even referred to, as "Son of Abraham!" The reason for this is evident. "Son of David" links our Lord with Israel's *throne*; whereas "Son of Abraham" connects Him with the *promised Land*. As then Matthew presents our Lord as making offer of the *Messianic Kingdom* to Israel the Son of David title is made prominent; and as he shows that Israel *refused* to comply with the terms on which it was offered to them, which was the reason why (from the human side) the Kingdom was not then set up and the promise of God to Abraham concerning the Lord *made good*, it follows, therefore

that our Lord is not seen filling the “Son of Abraham” character in this Gospel, nor will He make good this title till His Second Advent.

In this connection let us also say a few words respecting our Lord’s title of “The Son of Man.” This title is found no less than thirty-two times in Matthew’s Gospel—*the very same number* of times the “Kingdom of Heaven” is here mentioned! The reason for this frequent repetition is not far to seek once we grasp the true significance of this title. It is as “Son of Man” that the “Ancient of Days” gives Him authority to administer *the Kingdom* (see Dan. vii:13, 14). The “Son of Man” title therefore connects our Lord with the *Messianic Kingdom*. If further proof of this be required, the following passages, among others, will supply it—“There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see *the Son of Man* (not “The Saviour”) coming *in His Kingdom*” (Matt. xvi:28), and, as the sequel shows, the “Kingdom” here referred to is Messiah’s *earthly* one. Again we read, “When *the Son of Man* (not “The Son of God”) shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon *the throne of His glory*” (Matt. xxv:31)! Thus it appears how *appropriately* the “Son of Man” title occurs so frequently in the First Gospels.

2. Objection has been taken to the teaching that John the Baptist’s preaching related to the Messianic Kingdom, and appeal is made to the record of the Fourth Gospel to show that our Lord’s forerunner announced Him as “The Lamb of God,” and that the purport and scope of his ministry is clearly defined in John i:7—“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that *ALL men through him might believe.*” Will our readers please note that the word “men” here is in *italics*. Necessarily so, for the Baptist’s mission *did not* reach out to “all men” for the obvious reason that it was confined to the land of Palestine: therefore the “all” here must have primary and direct reference to “all” *Israel*. As to what “all” Israel was to “believe” we learn from Matt. iii:2—they were to believe that the Kingdom of Heaven was “at hand,” and to evidence their faith by “Repenting.” That John pointed to Christ as “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (the ultimate issue of His work), is immediately followed by the statement, “This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that *He should be made manifest to ISRAEL, therefore am I come baptizing with water*” (John i:29-31). Concerning the forerunner’s ministry as related by the Fourth Evangelist we insert the illuminating words of Mr. Grant—“Of this aspect (that furnished by Matthew) of John’s ministry we find here little indeed: for here he is not standing in the presence of the people, *but in Another Presence* of which he is come to speak. He is standing in the glory of that Light which is in the world, and he is transfigured by it. The austerity has passed out of his manner and form, and become the tender abstraction of the worshipper.”

3. It has been pointed out that *Baptism* was a prominent item in the

ministry of our Lord's forerunner, and because that after His resurrection the Saviour gave orders that Baptism should be continued until the end of the age (Matt. xxviii:18-20) it has been concluded that the "Kingdom" which John announced *also continues*, and hence that the Kingdom he referred to as "at hand" *could not be* the earthly Kingdom promised to Israel by the prophets. But it is sufficient to say in reply to this that *John's "Baptism" is not continued* all the days of this age. In Matt. xxviii:19 our Lord *instituted Christian "Baptism"* and did *not* perpetuate John's baptism. Christian Baptism could not begin until *after* our Lord's death and resurrection, therefore John's baptism *was not Christian baptism*, and hence the objector's argument completely breaks down.

4. In the "Sermon on the Mount" the "Father" is mentioned no less than seventeen times, and it is argued that as the revelation of God's Fatherhood is distinctly a *Christian* truth, therefore our Lord in Matt. v:vii must have been discoursing of Christianity rather than describing the characters of those who enter and the laws which are to obtain in the *Messianic* Kingdom. We will let Mr. Darby make reply to this—"At the same time the disciples are brought into relationship with the Father individually—the second great principle of the discourse, *the consequence of the Son being there*—and a yet more excellent thing is set before them than their position of testimony for the Kingdom. They were to act in grace, even as their Father acted, and their prayer should be for an order of things in which all would correspond morally to the character and will of their Father.

5. It has been insisted that the Kingdom of *Heaven* in Matt. iii:2 and iv:17 cannot refer to the Messianic Kingdom because that will be *an earthly* one. But this we conceive to be a mistake. We do not see anything incongruous in John speaking of Messiah's earthly Kingdom as the Kingdom of *Heaven*, and we believe the reasons why it *was thus* denominated to be as follows: First, Because it is *in Heaven* that the Son of Man receives the Kingdom from the "Ancient of Days" (Dan. vii:13, 14). Second, Because the Messianic Kingdom on earth will be in close touch with Heaven (see John i:51) and ruled from Heaven—"Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"—thus described because the Millennial Kingdom is in view! Third, Because it is to be *distinguished* thus from the other "kingdoms" described in Dan. vii, which were essentially kingdoms of *the world*, and it is because Messiah's Kingdom "is not of this world" (John xviii:36) that it is denominated the Kingdom of Heaven. The "Kingdom of Heaven" is contrasted not with earth but with "the world!" Fourth, Because, it will be Heavenly *in character*, i. e., it will be a reign of righteousness and peace. For these reasons then we say there was nothing incongruous in designating Messiah's *earthly* Kingdom the "Kingdom of Heaven."

6. One reason why exception has been taken to the position we have set forth in these pages is that it is unthinkable the Jews would have

rejected an offer of Messiah's earthly Kingdom, seeing that deliverance from the Roman yoke was the one thing they desired above everything else. The answer to this is: It is *misleading* to speak of the Jews rejecting an offer of the Messianic Kingdom unless some *qualification be added* such as the following—the Jews *refused* to comply with the *terms* on which the Kingdom was offered to them. The Baptist made no *unconditional* offer of the Kingdom to the Jews, but instead presented it *contingently*—on their compliance with the Call to “Repent.”

7. In John vi:15 we read, “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, *to make Him a King*, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.” The question has been asked, If our Lord presented Himself to Israel as their *King*, why did He here “depart” when the people were ready to “make Him a King?” In reply we would say that this verse must be studied and interpreted in the light of its context. Our Lord had just fed the multitude. A temporary zeal was awakened in them, and they were ready to “take Him by force” and make Him a King. But our Lord would not take the Kingdom from zeal like this. As another has said, “That would have been an appointment to the throne of Israel on scarcely better terms than those on which Saul had been appointed of old.” This could not be. Our Lord was to receive the Kingdom not from the hands of men but from the hand of God Himself—“Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Ps. ii:6—note the “I,” and compare Dan. vii: 13, 14).

8. The fact that the “Church” is thrice referred to in Matthew is adduced to show that this is *not*, in any special sense, the *Jewish* Gospel, and also that it militates against the view that Matthew records the offer to the Jews of the Messianic Kingdom. In reply let us say once more that the particular design of the First Gospel is not only to set forth the offer of the Kingdom to the Jews, but also to show us their *failure* to comply with the condition on which it was offered together with the *rejection* of the King Himself, and the *consequences* which attended their failure, the primary dispensational consequence of which was the substituting of Christianity for the Jewish theocracy during this present parenthetical dispensation. Hence it is that the “Church” is *appropriately* introduced by Matthew as that which is now taking the place of the earthly Kingdom during the time of its abeyance. Furthermore, and confirmatory of what we have just said, it should be carefully noted that the “Church” is *not mentioned* by Matthew until *after Israel's rejection* of Christ had been clearly manifest—reference is made to it *after* Matt. xii and not in the earlier chapters!

9. Against our position that the Lord's offer of the Messianic Kingdom *terminated* at Matt. xii, it might be objected that in Matt. xxi we see Him presenting Himself in Jerusalem as “King”. This incident must be considered in the light of its sequel. Only a short time afterwards the Jews who hailed the Lord with their “Hosannahs”

cried, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" Thus we are led to believe that it was *God* who sovereignty disposed their hearts to bear this testimony, for He would not allow His Son to be rejected without receiving it! But in the scenes which followed the Jews gave full *confirmation*, and which it was designed by God they *should* be permitted to give of a rejection which had really taken place before. That our Lord fully foresaw the *sequel* to His Entry into Jerusalem, and that He rightly estimated the worth of the acclaims of the masses on that occasion, is evident from the fact that *before* He passed through its gates He wept over the doomed city (see Luke xxi:41-44)!

10. We have left till the last the most forcible objection, and one that, no doubt, has proven a real difficulty with many. Before we state it let us express clearly the particular point against which the objection is levelled. There is need for us to do this, for it has been grossly *misrepresented*. We have already seen that an offer of the Messianic Kingdom was made to the Jews by the Baptist, by our Lord, and by the Twelve; the offer being not an *unconditional* one, but *contingent* on Israel's "repentance." It is natural that the question be asked, *What* would have happened if Israel *had* complied with the condition, *had* repented? In reply let us say with emphasis, that the Messianic Kingdom *would not* have been set up *immediately* (and so far as we know no one has ever taught that it *would*), though this is the *assumption* of those who take the other view, and it is because their assumption is entirely *erroneous* that their arguments to *disprove* it are all quite beside the mark.

We have previously pointed out that the prophecies of Daniel made it clear that a part of the Nation *would not respond* to the Call of Repentance, but instead would be in sympathy with the Antichrist when he appeared. We have also suggested, in case there had been a *general* response to John's Call, that those who had "repented" would have formed the "saints" of Dan. vii:21 upon whom the "little horn" is to "make war;" in other words, the godly Jewish remnant of the tribulation period. Further, it is abundantly clear from Old Testament prophecy that, in any event, the Lord Jesus was to be *crucified* by the Jews, and these prophecies would then have found their fulfillment at the hands of that part of the Nation which had repented not. It is also plain from Old Testament prophecy that after His crucifixion the Lord Jesus should rise again from the dead and return to Heaven, but nothing is said as to *how long* He should remain there. Therefore, had there been a *general* Repentance among the Jews at the time of which we are speaking, after our Lord's crucifixion, which terminated Daniel's sixty-ninth week (Dan. ix:25, 26), the seventieth would have followed without any break, and at the close of it Christ would have descended to earth and set up His Kingdom. But here we are faced with the objection, This could not be for then the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's "Image" (Dan. ii) which outlined the course of the "times of the Gentiles" would have been falsified. Extremely puerile is such an

objection. It is scarcely necessary to remind those for whom this is written that the *fourth* of the four "Kingdoms" of which Daniel's Image speaks was already in existence when our Lord was born at Bethlehem, and there was nothing in the whole book of Daniel which intimated how long the Roman Empire or the times of the Gentiles must continue! The Image was already there, right down to "the legs of iron" when the Baptist appeared, and the feet and ten toes would have found their fulfilment in the seventieth week which might have followed the sixty-ninth without any break.

But again, the question is asked, If the Seventieth week had immediately followed the sixty-ninth and the Millennium had succeeded this, then what of the *Church* which is the Body of Christ that is being built during the break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks? In reply we would say the fact is, the above difficulty is purely a *hypothetical* one. Israel did not comply with the terms on which the Kingdom was offered to them, and therefore we need not unduly exercise ourselves as to what would have happened if they had.

But, it may be asked, If God had eternally purposed to form the One Body (and He had) how could He make a *bona fide* offer of the Kingdom to Israel? This raises the old problem of the relationship of Divine sovereignty and human responsibility, which must always be looked at separately. How can God command that a *bona fide* offer of the Gospel should be made to "every creature" when He foreknows that many will reject it? It is perfectly evident from Matt. xii that the Pharisees had committed the sin for which there is "never forgiveness," and yet the Lord bade His disciples go forth and preach the Gospel to *every creature*—but how could a *bona fide* offer of the Gospel be made to these who had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit? Once more it was certain that Peter would deny his Lord, for Christ said he would; yet after He had announced Peter's fall, He directed him to "watch and pray" lest he enter into temptation! Where was the consistency of this? Now these cases will never be properly understood until we separate in our minds God's sovereign and immutable decrees and man's responsibility. God had decreed the unpardonable sin of the Pharisees (though the sin was theirs, not God's), yet they were responsible creatures, and in view of their responsibility the Gospel must be preached unto them. God had decreed that Peter should deny His Son (yet the sin was Peter's), but it was in view of his responsibility that the Lord told him to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation. In the same way, God had decreed that the Jewish nation should reject and crucify their King, but it was their responsibility that was being tested when the Kingdom was offered to them on the condition of their repentance.

There has been no change of plans on God's part. He foreknew (put it that way, if "He decreed" be objected to) that the Jews would reject the offered Kingdom, and, speaking after the manner of men, He made His plans accordingly. God had eternally purposed the salvation and glorification of the One Body, but that is God's side! From the *human*

side, the Jews were His covenant people, they to whom His Son was promised and *their responsibility* must be tested. The test was their response to John's message. God's offer to them was a *bona fide* one, just as is the Gospel offer today to the non-elect. "Whosoever will may come," and if all came, all would be saved. And this is the *human* side again. From the *Divine* side *only those* come to Christ that were "given" to Him by the Father (John vi:37). So also, if Israel had repented the Kingdom would have been set up seven years later. But from God's side it was decreed they should reject His Son (Acts ii:23). The "if" in the case is no invention of ours, but the word of Christ Himself—"If ye will receive him (John) this is Elijah which was for to come." That which needs to be insisted upon is, that it is a *fact* that the Messianic Kingdom was offered to Israel, and if this be admitted, then it is only our *unbelief* which would seek to set it aside by objections of our own inventing.

VII. Summarization.

1. Surely the Old Testament leads us to expect that when Christ came, His ministry and appeal, in the first instance, and with special definiteness, would be to the people with whom Jehovah had such close relations and covenant engagements from Abraham downwards. Even *after* Pentecost the testimony was "to the Jew first;" how much more *before* that event! Hence it is that the opening book of the New Testament shows the fulfilling of this expectation.

2. Matthew gives prominence to Christ as "*The Son of David*," which links Him with the throne of Israel and shows Him to be the Head of the *earthly* Kingdom.

3. The visit of the "wise men" who came to worship the Christ Child which is found alone in Matthew would be entirely out of place in any of the others, but is appropriately inserted in the First Gospel, inasmuch as it emphasized His *earthly* Kingship and foreshadowed His rejection by the Jews and acceptance by the Gentiles. and it should be particularly noted here that the Magi came to do Him homage not as the Redeemer or Saviour but as "*the King of the Jews*."

4. That the Baptist is termed "an Elijah" if Israel would "receive him" is perfectly unintelligible save on the understanding that his ministry and message were identical in their character and scope with that of the Tishbite, who shall yet appear to "restore all things" and prepare Israel to receive their Savior and King. If then John's ministry and message were identical with that of Elijah in the Great Tribulation, then they certainly must be *distinguished from* the Gospel of Grace, from Christianity as such, and therefore from Church-teaching. That only in Matthew do we read of John being termed "an Elijah," and that only here do we read of him announcing the Kingdom of Heaven as "at hand," evidences that Matthew's Gospel is peculiarly *Jewish* in its character and scope.

5. That John's baptism was not Christian baptism is clear from the fact that the latter is unto Christ's Death (Rom. vi:3, 4), and this shows

that John's ministry was in no wise connected with Christianity as such.

6. That in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord promises that the meek shall inherit *the earth* is proof that He was not discoursing in connection with the Heavenly calling.

7. That in sending forth the Twelve our Lord commanded them to go not in the way of the Gentiles, is impossible to understand if we assume that, from the beginning of His ministry, our Lord proclaimed the Gospel of Grace—for grace recognizes no distinctions, but is exercised on the basis of no difference.

8. If our Lord did not present Himself to Israel as their *King*, then why did He not rebuke Nathaniel (John i:49) for hailing Him as such?

9. If Matthew is not peculiarly the Jewish Gospel, and if it is not specially concerned with the earthly Kingdom of Messiah, then how can we possibly account for the fact that *he says nothing whatever* about the *Ascension of Christ*? Why does *his* Gospel close with our Lord *still on the earth*?

10. That the Kingdom is *variously* presented in Matthew's Gospel should be clear from all we have considered in these pages. As a summary we may put it thus: The Kingdom is presented first to *Jewish responsibility* (i-xii); second, the Kingdom is seen *in mystery* in a series of Parables (xiii-xxiii); third, the Kingdom *in tribulation*, after the removal of the saints to Heaven (Matt. xxiv); fourth, the Kingdom *in manifested power* at the Glorious appearing of Christ, according to the testimony of the prophets (Matt. xxv).

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